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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - LEBANON - SYRIAN PULLOUT
RUSSIA - YUKOS TRIAL - PUTIN TO ISRAEL
PARIS - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [11. LEBANON - SYRIAN PULLOUT](#)
[12. RUSSIA - YUKOS TRIAL - PUTIN TO ISRAEL](#)

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE SYRIAN PULLOUT FROM LEBANON ELICITS WIDE COVERAGE,
PARTICULARLY IN LE FIGARO, WHICH LENDS ITS PAGES TO SEVERAL
COMMENTARIES AND INTERVIEWS. ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE,
NISSIM ZVILI PENS AN OP-ED CALLING FOR THE DISARMING OF
HEZBOLLAH AFTER THE SYRIAN PULLOUT FROM LEBANON, " WHICH CAME
ABOUT THANKS TO FRANCO-AMERICAN PRESSURE. BUT IF FRANCE AND
EUROPE WANT TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THEY MUST BE
COHERENT IN THEIR APPROACH TO SYRIA AND HEZBOLLAH." LE FIGARO
INTERVIEWS FORMER LEBANESE CULTURE MINISTER GHASSAN SALAME ON
THE ROLE PLAYED BY FRANCE IN SYRIA'S PULLOUT FROM LEBANON:
"FRANCE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CREATING A DYNAMIC FOR THIS
PULLOUT, INCLUDING VIS-A-VIS THE U.S. THE OUTCOME IS A MAJOR
DIPLOMATIC SUCCESS FOR FRANCE. ALL THE MORE SO BECAUSE PARIS
DID NOT HAVE TO BALANCE IT WITH A QUID-PRO-QUO IN ITS
RELATIONSHIP WITH WASHINGTON, ON THE IRAQI ISSUE FOR EXAMPLE.
FRANCE MANAGED TO SEPARATE THE LEBANESE QUESTION FROM THE
FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM OR THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT.
THIS COOPERATION BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND PARIS HAS LEFT ITS
MARK. FRANCE WAS ABLE TO PROVE TO WASHINGTON THAT IN SPITE OF
THEIR DISAGREEMENTS ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE WORLD, POINTS
OF CONVERGENCE CAN BE FOUND."

ANTOINE BASBOUS, DIRECTOR OF THE OBSERVATORY FOR ARAB
COUNTRIES, ANALYZES THE "DILEMMAS OF HEZBOLLAH." (SEE PART C)
INTERVIEWED IN POPULAR RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR, BASBOUS
SAYS: "SYRIA'S CAPACITY FOR HARM IS HUGE AS IT CONTINUES TO
HAVE THE SUPPORT OF HEZBOLLAH." A POSITION SHARED BY JEAN-
CHRISTOPHE PLOQUIN IN LA CROIX. (SEE PART C)

VLADIMIR PUTIN'S VISIT TO ISRAEL AND HIS "AMBIVALENT" ATTITUDE
ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE AND AT HOME ARE ANALYZED BY PIERRE
ROUSSELIN IN LE FIGARO. (SEE PART C)

LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION DEVOTES A FULL-PAGE REPORT TO
MOUSSAOUI'S GUILTY PLEA, HIS MOTHER'S APPEAL TO THE FRENCH
AUTHORITIES TO HAVE HIM TRIED IN FRANCE "WHERE THE DEATH
PENALTY HAS BEEN ABOLISHED" AND HIS FRENCH LAWYERS'
ACCUSATIONS THAT "THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES HELPED THE U.S.
PROSECUTOR."

ON THE EUROPEAN AND DOMESTIC FRONT, CHANCELLOR SCHROEDER'S
VISIT TO PARIS "TO AID CHIRAC IN HIS CAMPAIGN FOR THE 'YES' IN
SUPPORT OF THE EU CHARTER" IS WIDELY REPORTED. IN ITS
EDITORIAL, LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION COMMENTS: "THE FIRST
IMPACT OF A FRENCH 'NO' VOTE WOULD BE TO BREAK THE FRANCO-
GERMAN ENGINE WHICH HAS BEEN PULLING EUROPE TOGETHER. ON MAY
29 THE FRENCH WILL NOT BE VOTING SOLELY FOR THEMSELVES."

THE AIRBUS A380'S MAIDEN FLIGHT SCHEDULED FOR TODAY IS
FEATURED PROMINENTLY ON THE FRONT PAGES OF ECONOMIC LES ECHOS
AND LA TRIBUNE, WITH COMMENTARIES CRITICIZING THE TIMING OF
BOEING'S PROGRAMMED ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT ITS SALES TO AIR
CANADA AND AIR INDIA, AND "BREAKING THE FESTIVE SPIRIT."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

LEBANON - SYRIAN PULLOUT

"A NEW FUTURE FOR LEBANON"
JEAN-CHRISTOPHE PLOQUIN IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (04/27): "SYRIA'S
INFLUENCE IN LEBANON WILL REMAIN STRONG. ESPECIALLY THROUGH
LEBANON'S INTELLIGENCE WHICH SYRIA HAS INFILTRATED.
COMPETITION FOR DIRECTING THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE WILL BE
OPERATING BETWEEN ISRAEL, EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN, BUT
ALSO FRANCE AND THE U.S. . THE CHALLENGE FACING LEBANON IS
DAUNTING, PARTICULARLY AS A SCENARIO FOR A SHOCK BETWEEN
CIVILIZATIONS CAN STILL BE FOMENTED IN THE MIDDLE EAST."
"HEZBOLLAH'S DILEMMA"

ANTOINE BASBOUS IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/27): "FOR
HEZBOLLAH, THE MOMENT OF TRUTH IS FAST APPROACHING. THE

DISMANTLING OF 'HEZBOLLAH- LAND,' WHICH SPREADS ACROSS LEBANON, IS NOT TO THE LIKING OF SYRIA. UNTIL NOW, THE LEBANESE DARED NOT CALL FOR THE DISARMING OF HEZBOLLAH WHICH THEY ARDENTLY WANT. WITH THE PROGRAMMED FALL OF ITS NUMBER ONE SUPPORTER, SYRIA, HEZBOLLAH FACES A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES FOR ITS SURVIVAL. WHICH INCLUDES A RE-ASSESSMENT OF ITS IDEOLOGY. AND THE DISARMING OF THE MOVEMENT IN ORDER TO ACCELERATE ITS POSITIONING AS A POLITICAL MOVEMENT. HEZBOLLAH WOULD BE WELL INSPIRED TO RE-ASSES THE NEW REGIONAL BALANCE OF POWER TO OPERATE ITS MUTATION AND JOIN THE LEBANESE CONSENSUS FOR NATIONAL UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE."

RUSSIA - YUKOS TRIAL - PUTIN TO ISRAEL

"PUTIN'S AMBIGUITIES"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (04/27): "BECAUSE HE IS FACING HARSH DIFFICULTIES AT HOME, PUTIN IS GOING ABROAD. TOMORROW HE BEGINS A TOUR OF THE MIDDLE EAST TO PROVE THAT RUSSIA CAN STILL PLAY A ROLE IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD. HIS VISIT TO ISRAEL WILL BE A HISTORIC MOMENT. WITH SHARON, HE SHARES THE SAME APPROACH, DIRECT AND WITHOUT CONCESSION, ESPECIALLY WHEN SPEAKING ABOUT THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. AS A MEMBER OF THE QUARTET, RUSSIA RETAINS, AT LEAST FORMALLY, THE FORMER SOVIET UNION'S ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE. BUT HIS SELLING GROUND-TO-AIR MISSILES TO SYRIA RAISES A LOT OF QUESTIONS. DOES THE KREMLIN WANT TO IMPOSE RUSSIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST BY AWAKENING AN OLD ALLIANCE WITH SYRIA, WHICH DATES BACK TO THE COLD WAR, NOW THAT SYRIA HAS BEEN WEAKENED BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN DROPPED BY EUROPE AND THE U.S.? NUCLEAR COOPERATION BETWEEN MOSCOW AND TEHERAN IS ALREADY A SOURCE OF CONCERN FOR THE WEST. PUTIN'S AMBIGUITIES, AFTER HIS COMMENT ABOUT THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION BEING A 'GEO-STRATEGIC CATASTROPHE' ARE NOT LIMITED TO FOREIGN DIPLOMACY. TODAY'S VERDICT IN THE YUKOS AFFAIR COULD SHED SOME LIGHT ON HIS INTENTIONS ABOUT RUSSIAN INDUSTRY AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT. IN THE MIDDLE EAST AT LEAST HE CANNOT BOTH PRETEND TO SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS AND RE-AWAKEN FORMER ANTAGONISMS DATING TO THE SOVIET UNION." WOLFF